

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

SHIFTING GERARS PROJECT
LAWRENCE

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W = WILLIAM
Y = YILDERE

SG-LA-T509

W: [Comment unclear]. They can, they can uh [long pause], they can uh (--)

Y: Sit comfortably. Do you want to uh, maybe [unclear]? [W: No] So it was a kind of jail that you said, the reform school?

W: No, people that gets tied up in nonsense and they get a year of jail, that's where they bring them. [Y: Umhm, but they're young kids] They can trust them. No, no, no, no more kids there. [Y: Uh, I think I] Rehabilitation, that's the word they used.

Y: All right. What was the reform school then?

W: Reform school just closed down and the kids are on the streets.

Y: All right, then they put them in the rehabilitation center?

W: Yeah, that's right. That's what it is. Rehabilitation center.

Y: And your job was to take care of the kids (--)

W: I didn't go that far. I left, I retired it was still little kids there.

Y: So you retired when? 1960's?

W: When the hell did I retire?

Y: How many years has it been?

W: '65. [Y: '65?] '66. [Y: Uh huh] Yeah, 1966, February.

Y: Yeah, so uh, between 1952, 1966, you got that job.

W: That's correct.

Y: Yeah, and uh, which uh, which job did you like better? I men uh, working at Textile?

W: Well naturally I like textile, that's more money.

Y: More money in textile?

W: Sure, absolutely.

Y: So you did not get enough pay in second, reform school, you're, after (--)

W: Oh oh, I got enough. I mean that's what they paid. The pay was, they paid us by, what did they pay us by the month.

Y: Yeah.

W: You know there were so many strikes in Lawrence. After 1912 there was one in 1919. [W: Yeah] And there was one 1922. And then there was one 1931. Do you remember any of those strikes?

Y: No too much.

W: No? Not too much.

Y: You were not involved in uh, (--)

W: I wasn't involved in the Lawrence. I was down the Shawsheen.

Y: Shawsheen. There wasn't any strike in Shawsheen?

W: No.

Y: Yeah. What did you do in Shawsheen? What was your job, the same?

W: Shawsheen? [Y: Yeah] I was the spinner.

Y: Spinner? So the whole time until the (--)

W: Absolutely, yeah. I got all my apprentice down the wood mill. [Y: Yeah] There were steps. [Unclear] You're a piecer, you're a joiner, and you're a spinner.

Y: Yeah. And uh, so you got married. I guess you did not go to dance again after work. What

was your uh, after work how did you relax? What did you do?

W: I done my job. I had a car. I bought a car. I used to go with my wife all over the place.

Y: Now when did you buy the car?

W: In 1920, yeah, right before [unclear]. 1927, 28, 26.

Y: So early? [W: Yeah] Wow!

W: I bought the first car at twenty-four.

Y: You must be one of the first people uh (--)

W: Oh, second hand cars bought too. [Y: Yeah?] Yeah.

Y: So then you could (--)

W: Two-hundred and fifty dollars.

Y: New one or used one?

W: No, no, used car.

Y: Used car? In those days two-hundred and fifty dollars probably was a lot of money.

W: You're darn right!

Y: Yeah. [W: You're right] And then uh (--)

W: At that time I had a good job down the, down the Shawsheen.

Y: Yeah. Did you drive your wife to the jobs, to the mills, or did you drive uh (--)

W: My wife was working very close. She was the Ayer Mill, it's only a stone throw away. And then she went nearer to home [Y: Yeah] at the Pacific Mills on Broadway.

Y: So uh, that is amazing. 1924, what you say? 1926 the first car?

W: In '24, a second-hand one.

Y: What kind of car was that?

W: Oh jeeses.

Y: Ford? Or what, what was uh (--)

W: A Whiped.

Y: What was it?

W: A Whiped!

Y: Whiped!

W: It was a big [unclear].

Y: Do you have any pictures of that car?

W: There's no more anywhere. [Y: No] In '26 I got myself a Chevrolet [unclear]. [Y: Chevrolet, umhm] I always had a car.

Y: I noticed you were driving good. Uh, for how many years do you drive?

W: Since then. I got a license in '24 and (--)

Y: Uh huh, yeah. You know um, I'm interested to know how things changed at the mills. You know, in the spinning room, uh, you know, new machines, new technology and all these things changed the work in the mills. And uh, when you started (--)

W: New inventions came in too.

Y: What came in?

W: New inventions.

Y: Oh. So how would you describe those change? If you look back how did the machines change through those years. It is hard question I know, but uh (--)

W: Well it's a tough question. [Y: yeah] They just about (--) [Conversation was interrupted by someone who walked in room] The answer to this is that the inventions were on the market when we closed up. We would probably be thrown out just the same as the mule we were talking about went out of style. They invented another kind of machine. They use it in the english spinning, the english spinning. They used that and they found out that they could use it on Worsted. And we were going to get bounced out because [Y: umhm] it's a stable machine, it does the same kind of work, and one girl can take care of them.

Y: One girl? [W: One girl] Instead of how many?

W: We were three. The piecer, and the bag boy.

Y: What was the first name, peecher?

W: A piecer.

Y: Piecer, piecer. Who pieced them together. [W: Yeah, yeah] Piecer, bag boy, and the spinner. Now uh (--)

W: Three, three of them.

Y: Three people. And what, when was that changed?

W: It didn't change as far as I know. That's what I thought. I don't know where the hell they put it. But we heard, and I know it's true, because it's, one guy says he used them.

Y: Yeah. So instead of three people [W: you got only one] one girl could uh, (--) What year was that more or less. 1930's, 1940's?

W: Yeah, you'd be all right. Thirties, or forties.

Y: Thirties or forties?

W: Yeah. They were just preparing themselves to throw the mules out. [Y: Uh huh] In fact I think they put a section of that at that time. But uh, when they closed up I went by there several times and they opened the window and they didn't, just took the whole machine, separate it in pieces and let it go. There was a freight car downstairs and threw it right in the freight car.

Y: Yeah.

W: It would put tears in your eyes. Work so hard and see what they do to it. You don't need it, just throw it away.

Y: Were you disappointed when they closed down and they said you are all done. [W: Unclear] You were uh, [W: absolutely] yeah. How did you cope with that. I mean that's hard, tough thing.

W: Well I had a wife and she knew what the score was and we went to work together. [Y: With your wife?] She went to work and I went for a job.

Y: Many people had hard time. [W: That's right] Then some people started drinking alcohol to you know, some people moved away. And uh, so you uh (--)

W: I was one of the lucky ones. In fact I [few words unclear] and we managed to navigate.

Y: Yeah. Did you have some savings you said?

W: I had savings. Plus we had, everybody in Shawsheen, or in the wood mill they could buy bonds. I bought bonds. [Y: Umhm, yeah] Every payday it would be a few bucks. And I

survived. Most of them didn't know that that existed. They just took it off the pay. And they [unclear] in there. We had a bond. They'd send it in to the bank. You couldn't touch it until you, until you were in need.

Y: Right, yeah. You told me that the pants you have on right now is what you uh, (--)

W: That's why I put them on today. You know I got another pair.

Y: Well you made that, or you [W: no, no] bought that as (--)

W: On a roll.

Y: And then you took it to a tailor, [W: yeah] and the tailor made it? [W: Yeah] It was what year, 19, 1950?

W: It was uh, let's see. My wife died in (--)

Y: When did she die?

W: In 19 (--)

Y: Well anyway. When you were married in 1926, [W: '26, yeah] you were '27? When did you get married? If '26 then uh, (--)

W: Yeah '27. [Y: '27?] I was married in '27.

Y: '27. You were married together '53 years?

W: Sixty-three, sixty, fifty-three years.

Y: So twenty-seven, 1980 then. [W: 1980] She died in 1980, is it true?

W: 1979. [Y: '79?] No, 1980. She would have been in September.

Y: So uh, why did you, why did we bring up your wife's death, I mean with the pants. Uh, you were uh, you were talking about the pants.

W: Well I bought that, I bought that, the sale. There was a sale on uh, we were getting rid of, closing the, closing the mill, that's the Shawsheen. [Y: Oh, I see] And we, I went downstairs and brought three rolls. [Y: Three rolls?] Yeah.

Y: And uh, I wanted to ask you, um, did you, did you go and see the end product you produced in Shawsheen? I mean did you, very curious what kind of fabric you produced?

W: No. [Y: No?] No.

Y: So you did not know what was coming out? You worked there as a spinner, but I was going to ask you , were you proud of what you were producing? Obviously you did not see it so there's no such a question.

W: This, this was, this was what came out of, sure.

Y: But you did not see in the mills how it came out, what you did, right? I mean you did not see the end product?

W: No, no. They must have been selling somewhere, but this was, this was sold up in the mills. They were getting rid of the whole thing.

Y: Did you see Mr. Wood in Shawsheen?

W: I seen him four or five years in a row.

Y: Four or five years?

W: Yeah, he used to make picnics for us.

Y: For the whole employees?

W: Yup.

Y: Where?

W: At the Shawsheen.

Y: But not for the wood mill.

W: No, no, no, no. It's the Shawsheen. You know where DeMoulas Market is? [Y: Yeah] On, in Andover? [Y: Yeah] Well it's right on the hills there. [Y: Uh huh] All in the back of the hills. [Comment unclear].

Y: So you had annual picnics? [W: Hm?] Annually, a picnic every year?

W: They done is three or four years and then I don't think, that was the end of it I guess.

Y: Did you have a person there talking to you? Or did he say hi, or did he greet employees, or he was far away with other guys,or (--)

W: No, he was with, he was with us.

Y: What kind of person was he?

W: Very good, very nice fellow. [Y: Yeah] Sure. I can't say anything about Billy. He [rest of

comment unclear]. [Beginning of comment unclear] Shawsheen Mills. The same thing. We went on strike, [unclear], he come over and talked with us.

Y: In Shawsheen you were on strike?

W: When Shawsheen went on strike? Sure?

Y: When was that?

W: 1930, 1932. [Y: '31] '31.

Y: Uh huh. What uh, what did you want? What did you want?

W: Nothing, just to talk to people, that's all.

Y: No, I mean the strike, what was it about?

W: I don't know, I really don't know? I followed the leader. They wasn't satisfied. I don't know. I was satisfied.

Y: Satisfied with the work, or with the money?

W: It was the work I think. I don't remember, but it didn't bother me a damn bit. [Y: Umhm] But I went on the picket line.

Y: Who was the leader at that time, do you remember? [W: Huh?] Who was the leader of the strike?

W: Gee I don't remember, I don't remember.

Y: Who organized those things in those days? I mean was there any union?

W: There was a guy, two guys from the weave room. I think there was a couple of guys come downstairs. There were five or six of them, leaders, you know what I mean? So I says, we go with the, I go with the fellows. It didn't bother me at all.

Y: Right, yeah. So were you happy with the conditions, work conditions?

W: Well that's something, because you're in, you're in a, you're in competition. And there's always some that gets better than another, and there's always someone crabbing. And some are real legitimately getting pinned down. I've seen section hands pinning them down to the knob. Fellow had to swallow. And don't uh, I mean that's a two way street. [Y: Right] You go to work and a section hand is going to give you different kinds of work. The work is your work like hell. It's a (--) And sometimes you strike a good lot and you feel good. And sometimes, some section hands they used to be a little on the radical side. You get an argument, or something like that and they don't want to forget it. [Y: No?] Well I've seen that.

Y: What happens? [W: Huh?] What happens?

W: What happens is he gets all the [unclear]. That's what he gets. See, he gets the works.

Y: Could they fire people?

W: No, they can't. A section hand, unless he goes to the boss and uh, and have it out with him just for, it ain't worth five cents, we had that kind of thing.

Y: Who was the boss? Who did you call boss?

W: We had Harry Speak down at uh, Shawsheen. Harry Speak as a boss.

Y: I mean Harry Speak was a, uh, what was his title? Was he uh overseer? Was he uh, (--)

W: Overseer.

Y: He was overseer?

W: He was top man for the, for that uh, for that division.

Y: Right, yeah. I mean the conditions in the, where you were working, was it hot, or cold, or dusty, or loud, or what?

W: The least you ever had it was a hundred degrees.

Y: Hundred Degrees? In summer, in winter?

W: Yeah, that's right.

Y: That's why you are so thin? [Both laugh] You lost uh (--) It's getting cold here. You lost all your fat in the spinning room? How did you, how did you manage, I mean with that kind of heat?

W: It gets natural to you.

Y: Yeah?

W: It's uh, it's very (--) They got conditioners.

Y: Air conditioners?

W: No, water conditioners.

Y: Water conditioners? [W: Yeah. yeah] Well how does it work? What do you mean water

conditioners?

W: Humidifiers, that's the name of them. They throw humid into the fire. [Chuckles] No, humidifier. Now do you know what a humidifier is?

Y: Yeah. It produces the moisture.

W: That's right. We used to have, it's a, it was installed on the ceiling. [Y: Yeah] And that kept the place humid day and night. [Y: Yeah].

Y: So it was hot and humid? [W: Hot and humid] What a great condition huh?

W: Yes sir. [Y: And uh] [Unclear] any, anything that uh, (--)

Y: What was the reason for that?

W: You get used to it.

Y: Why so?

W: The wool will not stay together if they don't have enough humidity.

Y: And the temperature.

W: That's right.

Y: And it's got to be hot to get the right kind of humidity. That's the, that's the job. If you're going in a [unclear] room, well anytime you see a [unclear] room you think you're in the, you're in the heat. [Y: yeah] Very very hot.

Y: So uh, I assume only men work there?

W: Over here I've seen just one woman, but they tell me that there was quite a few women in Europe that worked.

Y: In the spinning room? [W: Huh?] In the spinning room?

W: Yeah, yeah. In mule room. [Y: I mean uh, mule room?] Yup. That's when [unclear]. I seen one, but uh, they say in Europe it's uh, it's not (--)

Y: Yeah, well the reason why I said that, since it was so hot and humid, I guess people took their shirts off and then they were half naked there.

W: Well the boy, the men were half and sometimes three quarters.

Y: And so therefore I thought maybe uh, there was no women around.

W: I never seen any. That's why I told [unclear], there was one that worked (--)

Y: In Shawsheen?

W: No, no. I think it says the Washington Mill. One woman. I believe him, I didn't see it. [Y: Umhm] And they said, well it was common in Europe.

Y: Yeah, but here in the American Woolen Company where you worked, that was predominantly for men I guess.

W: Oh yeah, all men. [Y: Yeah] All men.

Y: And uh, since you worked for a long time you know inside out, are there other jobs just for women and no men work there?

W: Yes. The work that we get came from the drawing room. And there was all women outside of the section hand.

Y: The drawing room you said?

W: Yeah, drawing room.

Y: So mostly, or all of them [W: all women] women.

W: And they got a section hand that gives them the work.

Y: Umhm, yeah.

W: You see that starts off, it's that round the wool. And they got to, you got to [unclear] down, simmer down. Every machine gives it a, another, until they get it down to the mule room. There they give the, the thread the right, the right size.

Y: Oh yeah. The right thickness, or right size?

W: The right size, the thickness. [Y: yeah] They start it that way and they finish this way. That went through more than one machine.

Y: Yeah, yeah. Would you uh, would you describe your job as repetitive, tedious, boring, or none of the above.

W: No, I never had, I never had trouble with it. No. Sometimes it was hard, but uh, what the heck, you had to live.

Y: Yeah, right.

W: But uh, [unclear] for a better wool. [Y: Umhm] But that doesn't mean anything. He's

dissatisfied, he don't like it, he can go.

Y: So you felt satisfied with (--)

W: Most of us, most of us were here. Today I got the tough, I got the lousy job. Tomorrow you got it. That's why we had a section hand, to be fair. We're willing to take the bad with the good. And that's, that's the mule.

Y: What was the bad and good ones? I mean what was a bad job and good job?

W: Bad wool.

Y: Bad wool? [Y: Yeah] And so it was hard to handle?

W: They're hard to handle. [Unclear], you get probably one of those every six months. When they get one of those everybody knows what's going to happen.

Y: Yeah. But uh, were the section hands fair most of the time, or they uh, fair with some people and uh, (--)

W: Oh, they were very fair. It all depends you know. We were lucky to had had a section hand that used you all right. There's a lot, you know, we worked by lots. This lot is lousy.

Y: So if they were not fair you couldn't do anything anyway, could you? I mean if the section hand was not fair (--)

W: He'll probably bring us up to the, to the boss.

Y: To the boss?

W: You can do that. You'll probably win?

Y: What about the unions? When did they come in?

W: The union came in about four years before we put, we closed down.

Y: What about in uh, you said 1931 you said there was a strike.

W: Sure there was a strike.

Y: Was there any union leader at that time? [W: Yeah] Was there?

W: Yup. That's when we got the union in. [Y: 1931] That's right.

Y: And uh, I wonder if you remember which union was that? AFL?

W: I think that was it, AFL.

Y: Or CDO?

W: American Federation. I think it's (--)

Y: American? CDO was another one.

W: Jeese, I don't remember what the hell.

Y: Yeah, that's all right.

W: [Unclear] I thought, I thought, the AFofL, American Federation of Labor. And there's the CIO huh? [Y: CIO] I think it's the American Federation they had then.

Y: Yeah.

W: They had, I know they had to decide which they were going to go. CIO, or, and to be fair with you I don't know just which one carried it. All I done, I paid my dues.

Y: How much?

W: The dues, jeese, there's another thing I don't remember.

Y: Well that's years ago, I don't blame you. But did you paid weekly, or monthly, or do you remember that part?

W: Weekly. Yeah, weekly.

Y: So someone came and uh (--)

W: Yeah, they got a paper and so much, you should check it off. And (--)

Y: Could you uh, was, was it possible not to join the union? Could you say no, I don't want any union. I don't want to pay, I don't want to deal with you?

W: Yeah, I think that's right.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO BEGINS

Y: Anyway uh, when the mills closed down, did you have the feeling that they used you and then just dumped you there?

W: That's right.

Y: Did you have that kind of feeling?

W: That's right, sure.

Y: And uh, would you uh (--) I see that you did not do that, but I wanted to ask you uh, would you encourage your, did you encourage your children, or your child to stay away from the mills, or you did not mind?

W: Union and all this stuff is all passe. At the end there was no job. They floated. They close it tight and that's it.

Y: Yeah. Why did they do that do you think?

W: Well now [unclear], they went out of business. I don't know why, the American Woolen was a very good job, a good outfit. But I don't know the whys or anything like that. It happened very sudden.

Y: Many people uh (--) Yup. You did not have any idea that it will come? You did not hear any rumors, any gossip that [rest of comment unclear]? [W: No.] None at all?

W: None at all?

Y: So it was kind of a shock.

W: Well sure it was a shock, but it was kept under because if they had advertised it that they were going to close down a certain date, everybody would go out looking for a job right away. Am I right?

Y: Yeah.

W: That's it.

Y: You know uh, did you hear about the new law which requires six days, in other words, notice.

W: That's passed, isn't it?

Y: I thought it passed, isn't it?

W: I think so.

Y: You think it did not pass?

W: I didn't say that. I says that it passed.

Y: Yeah. So they had to give sixty days notification before they closed down the plant.

W: That's right.

Y: Do you think it would be (--)

W: My thoughts is not good on that. [Y: I'm sorry?] I'll never use it.

Y: Yeah. It would help right, in those days.

W: I think it would help, but personally it don't bother me because I don't, I'll never work. [Y: Yeah] I have to work in order to paid six weeks? [Y: Sixty days.] Sixty days. What the hell, that's nothing. [Y: Nothing? Uh] I think that should be law.

Y: Do you think it is a fair thing?

W: I think it's fair, sure.

Y: Some people are afraid that uh, (--)

W: Well the honest trouble is that uh, if you're going to get sixty days, and you go to work and you collect your sixty days, say you get a job somewhere else, unless, I mean there's more cheating in that stuff that you imagine. People are, some of them, not most.

Y: Some people are afraid that um, if you got sixty days notification, some employees might destroy the machines and so forth. Do you think that would happen?

W: No. No. I don't think people are that bad anymore. That used to be done. That was done in 1912. [Y: Yeah] But they found out that every machine that they break is taking jobs away from somebody else. [Y: Umhm] The whole thing is sixty days. That don't, that don't kill the, that will only kill the owner of a plant. Nobody will kill them. The hell, he's going to get sixty days, he still can bring in that man anytime in between if he wants to.

Y: Yeah. What did you get from working um, thirty-five years. What did you get? Did you get any social security money, or any um, when they closed down 1952, did you get any, any pay at all?

W: Nothing. Positively. The social security is no good.

Y: No good? Why not?

W: You have to be sixty-five years old. You can't collect.

Y: What about the (--)

W: Do you collect social security? You can't huh?

Y: No. That was the uh (--)

W: Well that's, that's what I'm trying to tell you.

Y: But can't you transfer that from one place to another?

W: Maybe, I don't know. I don't think so, but that, that could be. I heard that they were going to do something like that.

Y: What about insurance. Did you have insurance, any health insurance?

W: You had health insurance. That's no good for, to live on.

Y: I mean when they closed down did you lose it?

W: Oh, oh, oh, oh, you mean the mill after (--) Yes, I lost it. [Unclear], you can't do nothing about that.

Y: And uh, you know, Roosevelt, you know, introduced so many acts, so many knew things. How did those acts affect your work, or are you aware of what he did, or people around? Social Security was one of the uh, one of the Roosevelt's (--)

W: It's under Roosevelt, sure. [Y: Yeah] He gave us a good bill. [Y: Uh huh, uh huh] It's a good bill. But since then they've added up quite a lot. But uh, they're not going to get paid for, outside of the law required that they give them sixty days notice. [Y: Uh huh]

Y: You know these pictures?

W: Oh yeah. Yeah. The Oswaco was three quarters, the door, they go to the Oswaco Mill with that water.

Y: Did the workers, could they work? We are talking about the floor, 19 uh, do you remember the date?

W: Uh, I remember the date.

Y: 1936, right?

W: Yeah, thirty six, March. That's right.

Y: And uh, do you remember what happened? How people were affected in the mills? You said the basement was full?

W: The Oswaco Mill was full up to the, up to the door. See, like that. You know what I mean?

Y: Uh huh. So how did they clean up I wonder. The mill workers, did they clean their own mills, or what?

W: They couldn't get in. They had to wait until the water fell down. I thought probably you'd have it here. This is Essex Street. That's funny, you haven't got the Oscaco Mills. That's funny. They were right in the middle of it.

Y: Yeah. Well I wonder what happened to the Wood Mill? Did they get as much water as uh (- -)

W: No, they were high. [Y: Yeah?] They were high. [Y: Umhm] Oscaco was right, was right in the middle of it. This is what I'm trying to get. Wow. They say here's Shawsheen, Shawsheen Village.

Y: March (--) So do you remember how (--)

W: It was the Shawsheen Mill, well I don't see it?

Y: Did you get water where you were working in Shawsheen? Well you transferred there in 1924 you said. You worked in Shawsheen Mill. Did you get water there?

W: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was in Shawsheen.

Y: Was it flood there in Shawsheen?

W: No, we went to work. [Y: you did?] Yeah.

Y: So it did not affect you at all?

W: It didn't affect Shawsheen. [Y: Yeah] And then the Shawsheen River takes some away from the other one.

Y: Uh huh, yeah.

W: So you know [few words unclear] Shawsheen River out there. And that, that helps to clear up the water.

Y: Some people say that [unclear] had uh, like uh, um, if something happened to an employee, there was nurse, a doctor, or something. Was it, is it true?

W: You had a nurse. [Y: Nurse?] Yeah.

Y: Where, where was it, in Shawsheen or.

W: Yeah, in Shawsheen.

Y: So uh, what could she do? I mean how much could she uh, (--)

W: She could do about everything outside of (--) I think that she had, we had a nurse there, she was pretty damn near a doctor.

Y: Just a nurse?

W: Just a nurse. Oh yeah, but she could call a doctor anytime. She was there every day. [Y: Umhm, yeah] As I say, I don't know if it goes into the night, or what. [Y: Yeah] But uh, she was all right. You see I had uh, we worked barefooted you know? You didn't think that huh? We worked barefooted. [Comment unclear]

Y: Everyone, everyone barefoot?

W: Well if you want to wear shoes. But most of us worked barefooted. Once you kicked a couple of tracks, you know where they are, don't do it anymore!

Y: Tracks?

W: Well this mule here is one wheels. [Y: Right] And to put, you have to have tracks. And those tracks sometimes are a little high. [Y: Yeah, I see what you] If you don't watch yourself you're going to hitch them. Well anyway I'm coming back. They gave us some bad oil. We have to oil up the whole works everyday. The wheels and everything, the mule head. [Comment unclear] in my foot. [Y: Umhm] And all the skin went off, just the top here. I, I said it was oil, they say it wasn't. But uh, they arguing one or another. Anyway I went up to the nurse and she says, you come back tomorrow and I'm going to fix you up. And it was the night she called me in and she, what the heck was the name of that uh (--) Yeah, I know I used it yet, the name of the stuff. It's a tube. She says you take that and I had skin the next day. Not much, but little. It never bothered me until this heat we had there. The damn thing started again.

Y: I uh, do not understand that. The oil used, how did it happen? You said you had an oil, and how? I didn't understand.

W: We oil the machine. [Y: Okay] Now some of that oil fell on to my foot.

Y: Yeah. How did the, was it hot? [W: no, no] How did the oil damage your foot?

W: It damaged it because it was (--)

Y: It was some kind of acid, or what?

W: I don't know. It's the, it's the oil that done the trick, because (--)

Y: Right. So is it (--) Does it hurt if you push that?

W: No it don't hurt. But it did hurt. You couldn't put shoes on.

Y: So your skin came off? Like a burned uh (--)

W: That's right, just like a burn.

Y: And then you went to the nurse?

W: I went to the nurse right away.

Y: And what did she do?

W: She told me she was going to get some stuff for me. And she did. She put it on and it healed up. [Y: It did?] And uh, the summer here, it was so hot there, it acted, reacted it. [Y: Umhm] Oh yeah!

Y: And uh, were you worried about being layed off?

W: That's a worry all the time. That could happen any time. [Y: Did it?] Sure! [Y: When?] They feel that don't want you they're going to send, tell you to go home.

Y: And you just went home?

W: That's all. That's all.

Y: No pay, no nothing.

W: No. You know the people, people today are blessed.

Y: Yeah. What uh, what years? I men uh, I guess the depression years, there was not much job around in 1929, 1931, '36, or what, when was it?

W: It wasn't (--) When there was jobs, and when there wasn't. There was no in, there was no insurance. I mean that's, that's just plain english. [Y: Yeah] You can't uh (--) And it happened just like I told you. Bill, you're all through. That's it. I was one, I was the last one to get out of the Shawsheen.

Y: Uh huh. And uh, now we were uh, what? We were talking about the um, um, depression years. Uh, 1929 many people had really hard times. No money, no jobs, no nothing to eat. Uh, do you remember those years ?

W: You're damn right? I got married in '27, do you remember that?

Y: Yeah, what did you do? I mean a new married couple. Did you have a job, your wife, or you?

W: I had, like I told you I had a little money saved. And uh, we, we battled. We got through it. [Y: Yeah] But to tell you right just what I done during the depression, I don't recall outside of that. I must have had a job somewhere.

Y: Umhm. Did you, um, since you met uh, Billy Wood, did you feel personally connected to the American Woolen Company? I mean kind of commitment, loyal?

W: You're in a [unclear]. You're having some fun. [Comment unclear]

Y: I mean many people did not see him from, because you are working in Shawsheen. But those people in Wood Mill, or Ayer Mill, and other (--)

W: I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't know, but I imagine there was some for everybody. I don't think Billy Wood would have been uh, would have [unclear] me just for Shawsheen Mill. [Y: No?] I don't believe that. It was at least three years in a row we get them.

Y: Umhm. What did you do over weekends? I mean did you have and time, and money, any energy to go and camp, or holiday vacation, or I mean how was in those years?

W: It wasn't, that wasn't that bad. [Y: No?] No!

Y: Where did you go?

W: Well we had uh, we had our job. And we had, once we'd have to get off for a week. Get everybody a break. There was less, there was less work to be done for the same. So they had to thin out the workers in order to have a little money for everybody. I didn't, I felt it, sure. Like I say, I had a little to spare. But uh, we all had a job.

Y: What I meant was uh, did the company [unclear] their employees paid vacation? Could you go one week, or two days, or three days on vacation?

W: There was no such thing. It's like I tell you, they give you your working papers, that's it.

Y: Right. So I guess what I'm trying to ask you, what kind of things did you do for fun with your wife and with your family after work? Was such a thing possible in those days?

W: I'll tell you frankly, I used to get the kid, get in the car and we'd go down to Salisbury Beach.

Y: Well that's nice!

W: Well that's it. That was the only, the was my only pleasure.

Y: Yeah, that's good.

W: I never, I never went to a bar room. That was my joy, that's all!

Y: For one day, or when?

W: Pretty near every time it happens. One day we'd go there, the next day we'd go to Canobie Lake. You know what I mean?

Y: Did you have time to, not to go to work, but instead to the beach? Or you did that all weekend?

W: Any time. Any time that uh, it gets, you know what I mean, it's, you don't feel that way all the time.

Y: Yeah.

W: Sometimes I wouldn't go nowhere. Just relax at home. Even if we didn't work we still had uh (--) [Y: Right] And to be honest with you I had more fun with my wife than I did trying to shovel along with everybody.

Y: Yeah. And uh, now there are so many computer companies. Uh, Honeywell, Wang, Digital and so forth.

W: It's not the same gang. It's not the same at all. We were worsteds, cottons, and mule rooms, and everything like that. There's no more of that.

Y: Now it's uh, it's just the opposite. We worked like hell. Now they don't work and get paid. [Chuckles]

W: Do you think so? Yes. You work with your brains, all right. And I mean [Y: physically] physically. Of course there's still people that didn't want to go that throw the score on me.

Y: Yeah. [Clears throat] But uh, so looking from outside, do you think they have better than you did have in the past? [W: I think so.] Yeah.

W: I think they're better off today.

Y: In what respect?

W: Uh, the stakes are high, but between you and I, I think people are a hell of a lot better today than they were ten years ago, or twenty years ago. When you say twelve hours, during the war twelve hours a day.

Y: Did you work twelve hours?

W: That's right. And still you hit, you wasn't getting any side money.

Y: What do you mean?

W: I mean I only had one child. Some one that has two or three, [Y: four, five, six] yes, they were starving. At that, you know, it's only since fifteen years, or something like that, that people go out and buy, it's done. Buy a brand new car, swap tomorrow. Nothing for that. I never seen so damn many cars in all my life. I live near the Ford people. Everyday they come in with two loads of automobiles and they sell them. Like you could have a good rent, a good home for five dollars a week. How much you going to pay today. And they're charging me five hundred and fifty dollars a month. And I'm all alone. I don't use anything [unclear]. I make my food and everything else. But I have the food, I have to make it myself if I want to eat, because I ain't got enough left over to pay for it. That's what I'm trying to drive at. People are not satisfied. If they're not satisfied it's their fault.

Y: You mean today people are not satisfied, or you mean in the past?

W: The people, that's right. The people today can out spend anybody of yesterday. And they still think they're not getting a fair shake. Am I right?

Y: They should have, they should have seen how it was thirty years ago.

W: That's right. If you go through it like I did I think they're a hell of a lot better today than I was. Like I say, five bucks per week. That five bucks I couldn't get, today they get, they're getting five hundred and fifty [Y: yeah] for a month. That breaks down to what, a hundred, a hundred and a quarter a week. And they say that they get money they buy it. Somebody is getting the money. And I don't want to turn politician, but uh (--)

Y: No, I know what you mean. Yeah. But uh, you know, you are born in Lawrence. Spend most of your life, or all your, [W: all my life] all your life here. And how do you see, what is your vision of Lawrence in twenty years, or fifteen years. How do you see Lawrence will be, will look like? Do you have any (--)

W: Future, Lawrence's future (--)

Y: I mean we are not you know, future tellers, but uh, how do you see it?

W: I, I say that the next oh, the next four years is going to tell you the whole story, how Lawrence will be fifteen years from now.

Y: Why four?

W: He'll have to decide on a college. You got to decide what you're going to do for the people in Lawrence. They don't know what to do with them? They'll have to find a way to heat them people, feed those people, because you got, and you got (--) Part of your, your people today, it's not nice. You get a few bucks and it's dope and all that. Inside of four years you'll see what the hell the difference is. They'll have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in order to get straightened out. And right on the spot they ain't doing a damn thing. They're [unclear]. [Y: So] Like I says, I don't care to go in the politics, but you'll have to go in the politics if you want

to see [rest of comment unclear].

Y: When uh, when you were um, when you were working there, after the mills closed down, did you miss the job you had in the mills and did you miss the people you were with?

W: That's right, yeah. [Y: Did you?] Sure.

Y: What did you miss? I mean what was the (--)

W: I miss the friendships.

Y: You did not have those kinds of relationships, I mean those friends in your new job? You did not have? I mean you were alone? No.

W: I was alone, sure.

Y: But you couldn't make new friends in the new place?

W: I made more friends. I got all the friends I wanted. I still got plenty of friends.

Y: What did you miss then?

W: I missed, when you to another job you're missing your, you're missing your work, that's all. But you can't do nothing about it. I couldn't.

Y: Did you get the promotion you know, in those years? First you started five dollars, seventy-six, and then you went to seven dollars. And there was a steady promotion, or you stop somewhere?

W: No, you stop right when you're a spinner. That's it.

Y: You did not get more money afterwards?

END OF TAPE